

KDHE'S Holds First Minority Health Conference April 13

More than 250 advocates from across Kansas convened April 13 in Lawrence to participate in the state's first minority health conference. The Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) hosted the inaugural conference - *Minority Health Conference 2005: Connecting Kansas Communities* at the Holiday Inn.

Gov. Kathleen Sebelius, and Dr. David J. Williams, addressed the conference on issues regarding the direction and impact of health care among diverse populations in Kansas.

"We have a lot of work to do," said Gov. Sebelius at her noon address.

The disparities, Sebelius said, confirmed her administration's long-held notion that a "one-size (health care policy) does not fit all," and should be flexible enough to reach minority communities within the state.

"This conference was created to bring together health professionals and community champions from across Kansas to share best practices and learn about new strategies and resources to improve the health of diverse populations in the state," said KDHE Secretary Roderick L. Bremby.

"Gov. Sebelius has made the improvement and availability of health care and services to all Kansans a priority," Bremby noted, "and by bringing together health care professionals and community partners for this effort, we will be taking steps together to make the Kansas health care system one that is accessible to all populations."

The keynote address by Dr. Williams focused on his research of 10 key facts in racial and ethnic differences in health.

Williams, the Harold W. Cruse Collegiate Professor of Sociology, a Senior Research Scientist at the Institute for Social Research and a Professor of Epidemiology in the School of Public Health, at the University of Michigan has focused his research on social influences on health and is centrally interested in the trends and determinants of socioeconomic and racial differences in mental and physical health. He is the author of more than 125 scholarly



Dr. David Williams (right) visits with advocates for improving minority health after his keynote address at April 14 Minority Health Conference sponsored by KDHE in Lawrence.

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papers in scientific journals and edited collections and his research has appeared in leading journals in sociology, psychology, medicine, public health and epidemiology.

Nine workshops ranged from “The Newest Immigrants” to “Healthy Communities of Color.” The conference concluded with a summary of the day’s activities and a panel discussion of minority health experts on the ‘next’ steps in improving minority health in Kansas.

Also in a separate event at the Conference, KDHE and the Kansas Health Institute held a news conference to jointly release the findings of a four-year study on racial health disparities in Kansas. Conference attendees received a CD-ROM of the report. The report is also available on www.minorityhealthks.org.

KDHE’s partnering sponsors included Glaxo Smith Kline, United Methodist Health Ministry Fund, AARP, Sunflower Foundation, Region VII U.S. Dept. of Health & Human Services/Office of Minority Health, Dept. of African & African-American Studies, at the University of Kansas, and the Brown Foundation.

Conference information, and presentations are available on the web at www.minorityhealthks.org.